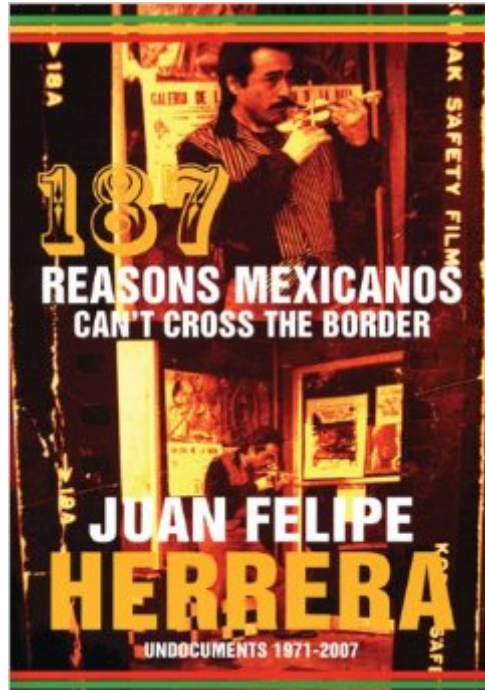


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# 187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross The Border: Undocuments 1971-2007



## Synopsis

A hybrid collection of texts written and performed on the road, from Mexico City to San Francisco, from Central America to central California, illustrated throughout with photos and artwork. Rants, manifestos, newspaper cutups, street theater, anti-lectures, love poems, and riffs tell the story of what it's like to live outlaw and brown in the United States. Juan Felipe Herrera is a professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside. The author of twenty-one books, he is also a community arts leader and a dynamic performer and actor. He is the son of Mexican immigrants and grew up in the migrant fields of California.

## Book Information

Paperback: 278 pages

Publisher: City Lights Publishers; 1st Edition edition (November 1, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0872864626

ISBN-13: 978-0872864627

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (8 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #581,456 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #56 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > United States > Hispanic American](#) #103 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Hispanic & Latino](#) #112 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > Caribbean & Latin American](#)

## Customer Reviews

187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross the Border contains amazing poetry, anti-poetry, narratives and short stories of Herrera's works for over 35 years. This book gathers the "undocuments" from 1971-2007, and reading it you can watch the history of the Mexicano unfold before you, it is as though Herrera has painted a wall, a wall of graffiti. Art many willingly accept yet others will walk right past never daring to look too hard. This wall is sometimes disjointed, uncomfortable, and awkward, but that is the life of the Mexicano in this world, and that is the beauty of the picture Juan Felipe Herrera lays before his readers. Also like a graffiti wall in that you get little snippets of love and hate, of peace, of war, of pride and self-consciousness. Each story or poem gives glimpses, which alone would be beautiful, but in this compilation they become completed as all together they form a whole. Reading through the undocuments, some really captured me, drove me to a new level

of compassion and understanding, while others were most likely targeting someone else. Just as walking through an art exhibit some pieces you cannot tear yourself from, others you barely notice...and understand that each viewer/ reader will take home a completely different experience. Herrera will meet you where you are. He will challenge you at the place you now find yourself. Herrera goes beyond these borders and also captures the relations between the landinos and the indios of Mexico and the full America Latina. He goes out of his way to show us the differences, the similarities, and the life, that if we are not living are not aware of the difficulty that comes with it. Yet, this is not only a text full of sadness, pain and suffering, it is just as full of pride, loyalty, love, and acceptance. It is a modern day Tarzan call to all those who will hear, it is a cry that rings throughout the nations, a call that when read cannot be ignored, it is a cry mostly for truth, and justice. It is a call to be prideful of your heritage, to not give in to smoothing differences, to not change the way you appear to yourself or to the critics around you. In 187 Reasons Mexicanos Can't Cross the Border, Herrera displayed one thing with the loudest voice: injustice. He gave injustice a voice- a jagged, crunchy, palpable voice.

Aware, phosphorescent and immediate, this is language brilliantly engaged. Juan Felipe Herrera is simultaneous lighthouse and lightning, the flash that carries the warning and the live wire. For three decades now Herrera's hot-colored Surrealism has transmitted one of the strongest border radio signals of alt-poetics from the Mission District to St. Mark's Poetry Project, from the Taos Poetry Circus to Bisbee, from the first Floricantos of the Bay Area or cross-border exchanges in Tijuana and D.F., Chiapas and Yucatan to San Diego, L. A., Austin and beyond. This poetics makes a practice of making a difference. Here available together for the first time are wide-ranging selections from dozens of Herrera's outstanding 'experimental' mixed-genre books, many of which had eccentric or limited original distribution. Contextualized with photos, historical notes and chronology, 187 Reasons serves up both continental panorama and meta-document in the practice of a poetics that comes alive with startling vitality---across borders of political silence and censorship of the Other, semiotic deserts and actual killing fields.

This is a review of the title - poem of this collection which I heard Herrera read. I found it to be full of inventiveness, humor, and surprise. It is rich in ideas and informed by a spirit of strong identification with the Mexican- American reality, and the injustices the author feels this community suffers. The work has liveliness and wit. I say this without endorsing the political views of the author which I sense are very strongly left- wing and perhaps anti- U.S. government of any kind. I did have a

problem with understanding the work as I do not know Spanish and the work is filled with Mexican colloquialisms. I suppose the ones who can truly read and most enjoy this work are those fluent in English and Spanish and strongly identify with the Mexican- American community.

is brilliant, beautiful. My favorite writing mentor recommended this book as containing great list poems. Honestly, Herrera should be taught in more classes, read by more people...

Poet, teacher, author and Chicano activist Juan Felipe Herrera has collected some of his most provocative and autobiographical writing in this volume. These "undocuments" chronicle Herrera's travels in the U.S. and Mexico, and his relentless search for the soul and story of a people. Herrera's poetry is shouted with an upraised fist at one moment, intoned with a somber brow the next. He has no illusions, but his best work is powered by a grand vision of the past and the future. Some of the work is helped by a knowledge of Spanish, which I don't possess. Even so, I had no trouble being caught up in the sound and spirit of Herrera's writing. We need more documentary poetry like this to capture the real history of this country, and of the peoples and cultures within it. Highly recommended.

Written passion of a lifetime of awareness in the real world!

Great read. Takes time, a lot of time. Bien escrito, mano.

There is so much Great writing in this book! Four stars! Inspiring and very thought provoking. Deep thinking, and conversational content!

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